

A Supper For Mother's Birthday

A Story

By Antonio C. Muñoz

"TITONG, I think you'll have to catch that chicken today," said ten-year-old Beda to her brother. "This is Friday and Monday is mother's birthday. We agreed to kill it on that day for mother's birthday supper."

"I have it in the coop, Beda," replied Titong. "I caught it last night as it perched on the cacao tree."

"What else do we need for that little celebration?" asked Beda.

"Let me see. We have that chicken to begin with. I have fifteen centavos in my bamboo bank from the sales of my garden vegetables. We need five centavos for two candles—one for the church and the other for our altar. We've got to have bananas, lard, onion, garlic, and black pepper. The remaining ten centavos will be just enough for these things," Titong explained.

"We must have rice and fish," Beda reminded her brother.

"I can go fishing on Monday after the Mass. That will solve the fish problem," said Titong.

"And I can help harvest the rice of Manoy Cario tomorrow. I shall surely have at least a half ganta of palay when I come back in the afternoon," Beda added.

The following day was Saturday. Beda set out for the rice field which was in a barrio two and one-half kilometers away from their home. She carried a basket. In it were a sack, a knife for cutting rice stalks, a bottle of water, and her little provision.

She arrived at the place just as the people started to harvest the rice. At three o'clock in the afternoon, after six hours of hard labor, she had a sackful of unthreshed rice. It took her about an hour to beat out the grain from the stalks. The farmer then divided the palay into six parts—one part



to go to the harvester. Beda got two liters as her share. She came home late in the afternoon, tired and hungry but contented with what she had earned.

The whole family went to church the next morning. After the Mass, Beda dried her rice in the sun. In the evening, the two children pounded the rice. Before Beda went to bed that night, she had a little less than a liter of pinkish rice ready for her mother's birthday supper the following day.

Titong left for the sea after he had heard Mass the next day. He had with him his hook and line. At a brook, he caught some small shrimps for bait. When he came back at noon, he had in his basket a fairly good-sized fish and a few small ones.

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